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ABSTRACT

Recent studies by the Management and Coordination Agency of the Japanese government and the Japan Overseas Educational Services (JOES) reveal that Japanese students returning from overseas want to retain their foreign language, and that a majority undertake various maintenance activities. Maintenance classes are widely adopted. Research indicates preferences for instructional methods and elements desired to improve the classes. Four types of maintenance classes exist. They include the following: private organization offerings, volunteer group offerings, district educational board classes, and classes offered as part of the school curriculum at special "Ukeireko" schools with a quota for returnees. Based on these findings, features of a desirable maintenance program include opportunities for intercultural encounters, class placement based on proficiency rather than age, accessible location, more class sessions per week, qualification standards for teachers and students, and emphasis on interaction-based instructional methods and materials appropriate to the Japanese culture. It is concluded that while the opportunities for enhancement and maintenance are somewhat limited, they do exist and there is evidence that quality and quantity will increase both inside and outside the schools. (MSE)

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Foreign Language Maintenance Classes for Returnees

Kyoko Yashiro

Questionnaire Research

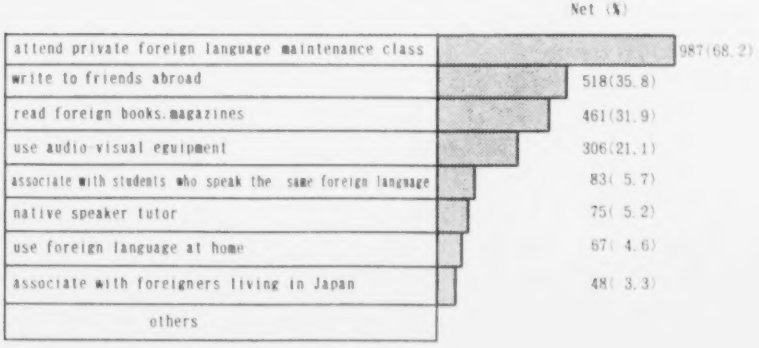
The maintenace of foreign language of returnees has recieved far less attention compared with the teaching of Japanese and guidance in readaptation in the public elementary and junior high schools. Though readaptation is the greatest concern of the returnees, it does not mean that young returnees do not care to retain their foreign language ability nor that attempts at maintenance are rare. Far from it, recent studies conducted by the Management and Coordination Agency of the Japanese Government and the Japan Overseas Educational Services (hereafter JOES) reveal that returnees want to retain their foreign language and that a majority of them undertake various maintenance activities.

1. Desire and Means to Maintain the Language

According to the research done by JOES in 1988, 92% of the 1447 returnees responding to the questionnair expressed their desire to retain their foreign language.[1] It is important to note that the desire to retain the language was not limited to so-called socially prestigious languages but also to languages such as Indonesian, Taiwanese, Swedish, Greek, and Dutch. As to the reasons for wanting to retain the foreign language, 83% said that they liked the country and 78% expressed their desire to continue friendship with their foreign friends. It was also found that 85% of the 1447 respondents were employing some means to retain their foreign language. Of these, 68 % attended maintenance clas-

ses (mostly classes offered at private organizations such as JOES and JAL Coordination Service), 35% continued to write to friends abroad, 32% read foreign books and magazines, and 20% used audiovisual materials such as video, TV, and language tapes (Table 1). Only 48 returnees (3%) had chances of associating with foreign friends of the same age group. These figures show that maintenance classes are the most prevalent means available and that there is very little chance of associating with foreign children of the same age group.

Table 1. Actual Maintenance Activities Pursued



The study done by the Management and Coordination Agency reveals a somewhat similar picture.[2] Of the 1,259 responding to the questionnaire, 56% pursued maintenance activities. Of these, 44% tuned into language programs on TV and radio, 41% attended maintenance classes, 35% continued correpondence with friends abroad, 13% conversed in a foreign language at home or with friends. One of the reasons for the considerable difference in the percentage of those who are pursuing maintenance activities between the two studies is due to the fact that JOES distributed 50% of the questionnaires to maintenance class participants since one of the aims of the study was to gather data on the evaluation of private maintenance courses. Another factor is that the sub-

jects were selected from the Kanto and Kansai areas where maintenance courses are relatively easy to find. Since the subject population is statistically unbalanced, figures in the JOES study need to be interpreted with caution. However, it is worthwhile noting that maintenance classes come in second place after TV and radio language programs even in the survey by the Management and Coordination Agency.

It is clear, then, that maintenance classes are one of the most widely adopted means for foreign language retention by returnees. According to the JOES study, the percentage of maintenance class participation was higher for girls than boys, and highest among elementary school upper graders. Fifty-six percent have one session per week, and 37% two sessions per week (Table 2). Thirty-one percent have attended the class for one year, 12% for two years, and 16% for over three years (Table 3). In 91% of the cases the instructors are native speakers (Table 4). Eighty-three percent of those who are engaged in maintenance

Table 2. Sessions per Week

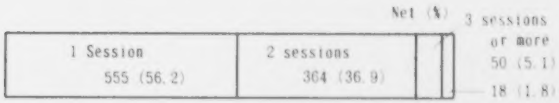


Table 3. Duration of Attendance

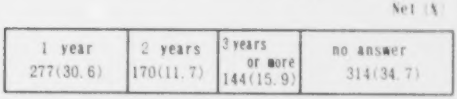
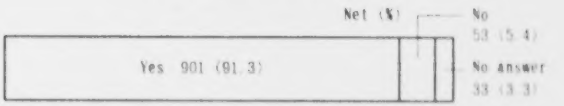


Table 4. Native Teacher



activities feel that their efforts have helped in retention of their language, though actual proficiency of the subjects' foreign language was not measured in the research.

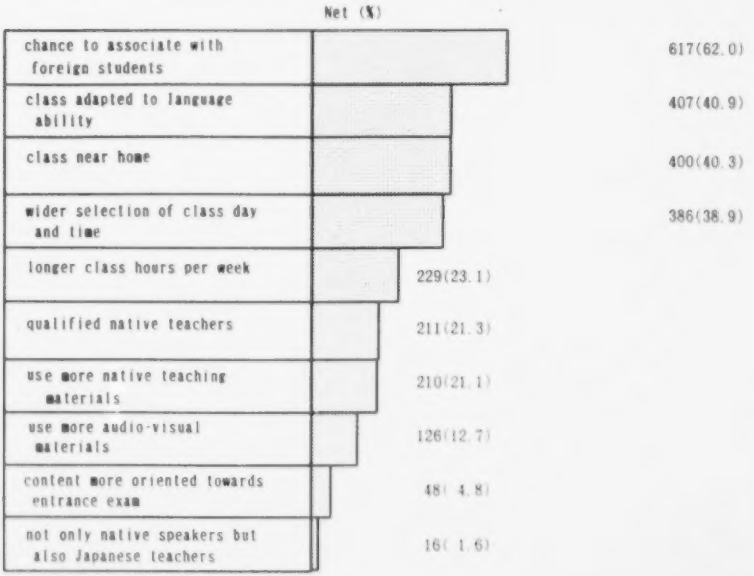
The reason for higher participation among girls than boys is not known from the questionnaire result. However, general feeling that girls are more able in language studies than boys and the general attitude that what counts with boys is not how well he can speak a foreign language but what he actually can say with it may have a lot to do with it. Though there is greater possibility for boys to use foreign language in buisness interactions in the future, they are less encouraged, thus less motivated to maintain their foreign language than girls due to what seems to be a social bias. The reason why there is less participation among junior high school students can be explained by the fact that English becomes a school subject at that level and that there is opportunity for maintenance type of activities at school. Another reason would be the heavier academic load for the students to study in preparation for entrance examinations to enter senior high schools. These can also be given as the reasons for relatively short term of participation in maintenance courses.

2. Amelioration of Maintenance classes

Are the participants satisfied with the existing maintenance classes? In the JOES study, returnees' parents were asked to select from 10 choices those items which they thought would contribute to the amelioration of the maintenance classes (Table 5).

Of the 987 respondents, 617 (62%) selected "chance to associate with foreign students". As can be seen from Table 5, the next most selected item was "class adapted to language ability". These and the items that follow reflect the deficiencies of the existing maintenance classes which will become clear in the section on types of maintenance classes in this paper. What is interesting to note here is that very few want more use of audiovisual materials. This may be due to the fact

Table 5. Amelioration of Foreign Language Maintenance Class



that audiovisual materials are already used. However, from the observation of maintenance classes, this seems to be unlikely.[3] The truth seems to lie in the fact that in the maintenance classes direct interaction is appreciated by the students more than passive viewing of videos. The last two items, "content more oriented towards entrance exam" and "not only native speakers but also Japanese teachers" are related in that entrance examination oriented instruction is better done by Japanese teachers of English. However, the fact that very few want Japanese teachers shows that Japanese teachers are considered to be unsuitable for maintenance classes.[4] At the same time, note that 21% are dissatisfied with the native teachers.[5] The returnee parents are very quality sensitive. Forty-eight parents seem to believe that instruction incorporating consideration for entrance examinations is part of the qualification of a competent native teacher.

Types of Maintenance Classes

There are four types of maintenance classes now in existence. (1) Classes offered by private organizations such as JOES and JAL Coordination Service. (2) Classes offered by volunteer groups such as International Children's Bunko Association. (3) Classes offered by the district educational board. (4) Classes offered as part of school curriculum at limited number of "Ukeireko" (schools with special quota for accepting returnees). Since a very small number of students have access to the fourth type, and there is already quite a lot of reports published on it, its description will not be included here.[6] The first type has the largest participation and the second and the third types are now growing in number.

1. Classes Offered by Private Organizations

Classes offered by private organizations which used to handle returnee reentry adaptation have the longest history of offering maintenance courses. Among them, JOES maintenance courses have a relatively high reputation. JOES courses which started in 1964 with 10 students have developed into a network of classes serving over 1,000 English or French speaking students in the Kanto and Kansai areas.[7] The classes are open to returnees who are in the third grade of elementary school up to senior of Junior high school. The applicant has to be a fresh returnee (not more than a year since reentry) and must have studied in English or in French for more than two years. As a rule class placement is based on age rather than language proficiency. Generally, there are not more than 20 students to a class. One session is usually 90 minutes long with a break in the middle. The instructors are native or bilingual teachers. As a rule no Japanese is used in class. Though ESL textbooks are used for all the classes, actual materials used vary from class to class. Since the organization is not aimed at making profit, tuition is kept at a reasonable level.

It is stated in the instructor's manual that the courses are conducted with the following purpose and objectives:

Purpose and Objective of the J.O.E.S.
English/French Language Program

(1) To provide a place where returnees can meet other returnees so that they can share their experiences and support each other in readjusting to life in Japan and develop their lifestyles.
(2) To provide a place where the returnees can express their feelings and ideas freely in English or French.
(3) To provide a place where the returnees can come in contact with native English/French speaking or bilingual teachers so that they can practice and improve their language skills.
(4) To help the returnees maintain and further improve the following communication abilities.
    a. to exchange feelings freely in English or French.
    b. to read in English or French.
    c. to write in English or French.
    d. to have discussions in English or French.
    e. to expand ideas and imagination in English or French.
    f. to communicate non-verbally.
    (facial expression, gesture, etc.)
(5) To provide the opportunity for the returnees to express their troubles and difficulties in adjusting to their new environment. If a student appears to have problems, the instructors are asked to help the student in the following way:
    a. provide support to the student.
    b. refer to the J.O.E.S. office if necessary.

(from JOES Instructor's Manual)

The courses offered at JAL Coordination Service, which are based upon JOES know how, have several improvements in the area of student qualification and class placement.[8] The range of returnees eligible for application is extended to include senior high school students. Those

who have studied in English for more than one year can apply. The applicants take a placement examination at the start and are placed into appropriate classes. The teachers are native or bilingual speakers. For the moment the classes are offered only in English and not in other languages.

There are several advantages and disadvantages to these courses. Some of the advantages are: (1) accumulated know how in the area of returnee education in general, (2) qualified teachers and large network of classes held at major cities, (3) reasonable tuition. There are also some disadvantages: (1) courses are strictly limited to returnees and not open to foreign children nor children of intercultural marriage, (2) classroom work is concentrated on language development through formal instruction, (3) there are no opportunities to associate with foreign children in class, (4) there is no course for returnees up to third grade, (5) there is practically no course in languages other than English. The organizers being aware of the desire of the returnees to associate with foreign children, are planning to create new programs which will bring foreign children and returnees together. Moreover, since there is a waiting list for maintenance courses, creation of more courses is being considered.

2. Classes Offered by Volunteer Organizations

The second category of maintenance opportunity is offered by the volunteer organization formed by returnee parents. International Children's Bunko Association (hereafter ICBA) is a good example. As the word "bunko" (library) indicates, the association's main aim is to bring children to books and to keep them close to books. ICBA differs from other "bunko" activities in that the books it offers are children's books written in a foreign language. ICBA was founded in 1979 as an outgrowth of a small group which was started in 1977 by three mothers, forty books and only five returnees.[9] Now, it has grown into an association of over fifty "bunko" chapters inside and outside Japan. What is most valuable in the bunko activities is that everything is done by

volunteers. Since no profit is involved, the organization is supported by highly motivated adults who are offering not only their time and effort but also a lot of affection and devotion. The bunko organizers were intercultural from the start and to date, there are a significant number of non-Japanese members.

The word "bunko" gives the impression that the activities are book centered. That is far from the truth. Since most of the children who come to ICBA are relatively young, activities are not limited to reading books. The session which is held at each chapter once a week for approximately two hours consists of playing indoor and outdoor games, singing songs, making objects, performing skits, and even making a story book of their own. A native speaker "animatrice", facilitator, usually leads the activities, but the mothers of the participating children also help out. Use of Japanese is strictly prohibited in an ICBA session to the extent that even conversation between a child and his mother is carried out in the relevant foreign language. Quite often children of animatrices will participate in the session, thus leading to friendly inter-family relations in many cases. ICBA activities can be understood as an example of combinatory acquisition method. Combinatory acquisition refers to cases where language is acquired in combination with a totally different activity, such as drawing or crafts.

There are many advantages in ICBA-type activity. (1) It develops the spirit of goodwill and cooperation between intercultural members as well as adults and children. (2) It is open to younger returnees who are not eligible to apply for formal maintenance courses. (3) Activity is not too study-oriented but rather performance-oriented, so that it is more enjoyable and satisfying for the participants. (4) There is greater chance of natural association with foreign adults and children. (5) Parents are responsible participants in the activities and not mere observers. (6) The relatively wide age range of the children offers opportunity to have a variety of vertical human relationships. At the same time there are some drawbacks. (1) Parents need to have high motivation. (2) Financial base is weak. (3) Graded language instruction is difficult. (4) Leaders

tend to get overloaded with planning and preparation when there is not enough cooperation. However, inspite of these drawbacks, the bunko chapters are sprouting up here and there supported by enthusiastic parents and children who long for intercultural activities.

3. Classes Offered by District Educational Boards

The third type of maintenance course is offered by district educational boards. In the past there were attempts to hold maintenance classes at several Ukeireko. However, due to the fact that: (1) the number of returnees was not large enough; (2) the language variance among the returnees was great; (3) the language proficiencies varied; (4) qualified teacheres were not available; (5) suitable teaching materials could not be found; continuation of such classes proved difficult. Now, the task of offering maintenance courses is taken up by larger public educational bodies rather than individual schools.

Nerima ward in Tokyo opened classes for returnees including Chinese returnees, as well as foreign children residing in the district in 1986.[10] There are classes in English and Japanese. Japanese courses are for Chinese returnees and foreign children. English courses started out with two classes, one for returnees up to fourth grade and one for those from fifth grade to the third year of junior high school. Japanese teachers of English led the class joined by a native teacher shortly after. In 1987 the classes were divided up into three levels; A class - up to third grade, B class - from fourth grade to six grade, C class - junior high school level. The number of participants was 30 for A class, 20 for B class, and 7 for C class. A and B classes are taught by Japanese teachers as well as a native speaker. C class is taught only by a native speaker teacher. Participation is increasing so that the district board is considering dividing the large class into two classes. It is interesting to note that A class, which consists of returnees under the age of ten, is the biggest group. It shows that in spite of the fact that some educators believe that younger children's foreign language is not worth retaining,

returnees themselves and their parents seem to feel it is worth retaining.

The Narima Program
–fall term 1988–

A group	B group	C group
Game: "Hangman"	Speech	Conversation about
"Scrambled word"	Game: "re tell a story	Muzic & Culture
Practicing Spelling	Crossword puzzle	Assigned story about
Words chain game	"Sports & Hobby"	James Dean
Stand tall as a play	Hearing "my future	Discussed subject &
Asked students to	job"	Verbs in complex
share something	Reviewed story "Bow	Writing assign.
Song of "OH Christmas"	Wow or Pooh-Pooh	"What I want to do"
Wrote letters to	Word chaing game	in the future
SANTA	Wrote Essays on the	Took up cartoon
	meaning of the Chrit	Vocabulary test
	mas, Christmas plan	O'Henry story
		Wrote essay on
		Christmas
		Essays on Japan

The Nerima program is going through its period of trials and errors. It is said to have learned from JOES know how. In fact, the textbooks used in the course were provided by JOES. Though the activities pursued in class include games, interviews, talks and discussions, writing and reading are also valued. Therefore, spelling and grammar constitute important part of the course. The program organizers are thinking of (1) making finer gradation in classes based upon language ability, (2) initiating activities which involve both English and Japanese classes for enhancing friendship, (3) incorporation of more assistant English teachers, (4) the possibility of offering classes in other foreign languages. Backed by returnee teachers in the organizing committee, the Nerima board of education is bravely attempting to cope with the language problems of the district children in the public educational system. There are many advantages for returnees in the Nerima Program. (1) The classes are conducted close to the place of residence. (2) The cost is

very low. (3) Returnees living in the district can get to know each other. (4) There are chances for associating with Chinese returnees and foreign students. (5) Instruction by both Japanese and native teachers makes it possible to learn English geared to Japanese curriculum as well as English geared for effective communication.

Discussion

Considering the items for amelioration of maintenance classes which were made clear by the questionnaire research together with the nature of the three types of maintenance classes presently offered, features of a desirable maintenance program will be discussed.

1. Intercultural Encounters

Though a majority of the returnees wish to have opportunities to associate with foreign children, such chances are very rare. In the courses offered by private organizations restricted to returnees such opportunities do not exist. In the ICBA type of activities there are such possibilities. Though the number of foreign children who are interested in exchange types of activities is small compared to that of the returnees, those who are interested do exist and they need to be reached through various means. The activities which bring both foreign and Japanese children together should not be aimed at language or culture per se. The activities need to be interesting enough for both parties. Camping, drama performance, craft, or even film making can be attractive-activities which can be pursued together.[11] This type of activity will enhance the communicative ability of the children and prepare them for better intercultural encounters in the future. It should not be difficult for private organizations to come up with programs interesting enough to attract both Japanese and the foreign population in Japan.

2. Placement

Class placement should be primarily based on proficiency rather than age. Many returnees and their parents voiced that desire in the questionnaire. Moreover, it is clear from the observation of over ten classes and interviews with the instructors that proficiency based classes functioned better in study-oriented courses. The instructors had a hard time coping with the wide range of abilities in class. They said that guidance would be easier and more effective if the linguistic level was relatively even. Some organizers claim that parents do not want their children to be in lower classes than other children of the same age. However, questionnaire results and interviews with returnee parents prove this claim to be unfounded in most cases. Of course, combinatory acquisition type of activities do not always require that participants be finely graded according to linguistic proficiency.[12]

3. Location

Location of the classes is another problem. To many returnees, attending maintenance classes means riding on the public transportation for over an hour and getting out to busy down-town areas. This is not only time and energy consuming but also expensive. On top of that, down-town areas can be undesirable for young children. Therefore, a second or third type of course as described in the previous section is more suitable. At the same time, in the second and third type, rent is not a problem.[13]

4. Class Schedule

Generally speaking the classes are conducted once a week for 75 minutes to 90 minutes. Some do have two sessions per week, but such cases remain rare. To retain a foreign language, one session per week is no doubt not enough. It may be that the increased number of session

will be more effective for maintenance than longer sessions. However, an increase in sessions will mean higher costs. How many will be willing to pay more?

5. Qualifications

The quality of native instructors varies. As a rule, native instructors are employed on an annual basis, though extensions are not hard to get. The organizers have a relatively good grasp of instructor's reputations and their evaluations are quite accurate. Good instructors stay with the organization longer. It used to be difficult to hire enough native speakers since the demand was greater than the supply, but the situation is improving. There are more qualified native instructors working in the field today. However, whether they are certified ESL or EFL teachers still remains a question. Under the circumstances, it seems very important that the organizers provide the instructors with appropriate information and guidance on what is expected of them and what they need to know about the students' culture and school environment. In addition, teaching aids such as books, tapes and videos and various materials such as games and simulations should be made available to the instructors. Teacheres' workshops and class observations would also be very meaningful.

As for the qualification of the students, many of the restrictions seem unnecessarily strict. If an appropriate placement test is used, it would be possible to put returnees as well as foreign students and children of intercultural marriages into the right class. It would also enable the more competent Japanese students to join the class.[14] In fact, it is not too difficult to find placement tests which measure speaking and listening abilities as well as reading and writing abilities in English.

6. Teaching Method and Materials

In the maintenance class, grammar-translation method does not

have a dominant place. Though returnees are said to be weak on grammar and translation, the grammar – translation method does not succeed in sustaining their interest nor is it effective in maintaining and developing their communicative ability. The method most frequently used in the class is interactional method between teacher and students as well as between students. Pair work, role play, skits, and group discussion work well. Textbook and workbook type of study should be kept to a minimum and a wide range of activities offered.

Materials used in the maintenance courses are usually ESL materials. EFL oriented materials are not as desirable. Sometimes, textbooks for native students are employed in advanced groups. Many of the ESL materials are developed for an international audience and are not particularly designed for Japanese students. The content culture is usually American or British or a mixture of the two. This is good to a certain extent. However, relevance to Japanese setting needs to be considered. Though returnees are less taciturn compared to the average Japanese, they need to be taught how to express their ideas and opinions in a way that the people from other cultures will understand them.[15] In this connection, teaching materials need to be developed to address this problem.

Conclusion

Japan today is the top official developmental assistance (ODA) giving nation and our non-governmental organizational (NGO) activities are are rapidly growing. However, the more money flows into the field, the more keenly the lack of qualified people to implement ODA effectively is felt. Japanese enterprises are going global. It is hard to find a nation which does not have a joint company with Japanese capital and/or management in the Western block. Japanese businessmen overseas are sweating over intercultural business encounters and community encounters around the clock. In spite of the fact that the government is trying to keep the border solid, economically motivated people are finding their

way into Japan. Foreign workers have become common phenomena in our cities. But are we prepared to and do we know how to communicate with them?

There is, no doubt, a great lack of human resources capable of improving intercultural communication. Our society and economy have changed far faster than we could imagine. Returnees who have long been labeled as valuable human assets in the so-called "internationalization" of Japan, have never received any serious maintenance nor enhancement of their foreign language skills nor international understanding abilities in the schools. Under the present system, only those who have parents with awareness and farsightedness can maintain and enhance their abilities. Too many returnees are left to forget their language skills and communication skills.

Nevertheless, this paper has made it clear that there are opportunities for maintenance and enhancement.[16] Though at present, the opportunities may be limited, there is an encouraging sign that quality and quantity will increase both inside and outside the schools. The most encouraging fact is that the people who really understand the problem, the adult returnees, are within the system doing something about it.

Notes

1. This research by JOES was conducted in the summer of 1988. The author wishes to express thanks to JOES for letting her participate as one of the researchers. The report of the research was published by JOES under the title of *Kikokushijo no Gaikoku go Hojikyoiku ni Kansuru Chosakenkyu Hokokusho* in April 1989.
2. This research by the Management and Coordination Agency was conducted in 1987 and published under the title of *Kikokushijokyouikutou no Genjo to Mondaiten* in September 1988. Figures on maintenance are found on pages 105 to 108.
3. The author had opportunities to observe 12 maintenance courses offered by JOES and JAL in Tokyo area.
4. There seems to be a deep mistrust of Japanese teachers of English among the returnee parents which is regrettable since there are more competent bilingual Japanese teachers today.
5. It became clear from class observation that some native teachers needed further training in class management.
6. Those interested should refer to Kaigaishijo Kyouiku Center of Tokyo Gakugei Uni-

versity for a complete stock of reports published by public and private Ukeireko.

7. Information concerning the JOES foreign language maintenance courses was obtained from brochures and instructor's manual and interviews with the maintenance course coordinator as well as observation of actual classes.
8. Information on JAL foreign language maintenance courses was obtained from brochures and an interview with the maintenance course coordinator, as well as observation of classes.
9. Information on ICBA activities was obtained from interviews with the director and leaders of ICBA and ICBA Newsletter and actual observation of sessions, participation in the Christmas party and the 10th Anniversary Forum held at Shibuya in May, 1989. ICBA has published a book on games under the title of *Let's Have Fun with Bunko Games* in June, 1989.
10. Information on the Nerima program was obtained from two reports published by the Educational Board under the title of *Kikokushijo Kyoiku no Genjo* in 1987 and 1988, as well as an interview with one of the committee members.
11. Both JOES and JAL conduct summer camps every year. Osaka YMCA conduts intercultural summer camps with Canadian Academy students.
12. For formal academic instruction, proficiency oriented classes seems prerequisite. However, for holistic type of activities this is not the most important issue.
13. ICBA sessions are held at public civic centers or private homes. Nerima classes are held in public school facilities.
14. Some mothers of intercultural marriage have shown great interest in language maintenance course as a possibility for their bilingual children. Some are members of ICBA activities.
15. This concern was shared by one of the committee members of the Nerima program. He said that he is considering using translated Japanese textbooks as reference materials.
16. Following articles by the author written in English are in the area of language maintenance of Japanese returnees.
    (1) "On the Maintenace of Kikokushijo's (Returnees') Second Language" *ICU Language Research Bulletin*, Volume 2 number 1, pp. 35–57, 1987.
    (2) "Second Language Maintenance for Returnee Students in Japan" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (8th, New South Wales, Australia, August 16-21, 1987). *ERIC Document Reproduction Service* No. ED 303 034.
    (3) "On the Foreign Language Maintenance Activities of the Japanese Returned Students", Forthcoming in the Proceedings of the 1989 International Conference on Cross Cultural Communication (San Antonio, Texas, USA, March 23-29, 1989).